

## A QUEER CONTROVERSY.

Maine Farmers Disputing Over the Skunk's Rat Catching Ability.

Tournaments Have Been Held by Shooting Clubs for the Purpose of Determining This Important Question.

The \$100 bet regarding the ability of an average Maine skunk to catch an average Maine mouse is still unpaid, and until the question is definitely settled the advocates of the proposed law prohibiting the trapping of foxes can make no headway against popular prejudice. Last spring the Sun gave an outline of the dispute. It was intended then to settle the whole question by an open field trial between a skunk and a number of healthy mice which the fox hunters might choose to produce. Since then three tournaments have been held, and though every one was attended and though every one was interested, the referees have been unable to render a decision in favor of either side.

At the first trial the skunk was shy and so frightened at the crowds of men that he wouldn't pick up a mouse when it was placed under his nose, though it is claimed that he caught and ate two mice after the men had gone away. While this answered the demands of science, it was far from satisfactory to the hunters, who insisted on seeing the skunk catch and eat a mouse before they paid over their money. At the second trial held in Sidney in October a tame skunk that had been kept hungry for two days was introduced into the pen among the mice. This skunk had no trouble in catching three mice, all of which he devoured in the presence of the spectators. Before a decision could be given the men who had waged money against the skunk declared that the mice had been caught recently, and were in a dazed condition, which unfitted them for trial. Upon hearing this argument the referee refused to declare the skunk the winner, and appointed a third trial, which came off in Randolph early in November.

Ten tame white mice were turned loose in a tightly fenced area two rods square, and when the guests had assembled and the bets had been made the tame skunk of the previous meeting was put among them. The skunk was not hungry and paid no heed to the mice that scampered about at his feet. A mouse was killed and fed to him, and a sharpener's appetite, after which he seemed to have no trouble in catching all the mice he wanted. When he had killed four without making any attempt to eat them, the men who had bet on the skunk demanded a decision, claiming that the skunk had fulfilled his contract, but the fox champions demurred, saying that white mice were not so agile as the wild field mice, and asserting that the two rods' limitation of the pen gave the skunk an advantage which he could not get in the open field. For these reasons the referee declared all bets off and appointed a fourth meeting, to be held in Chelsea next May.

Members of the Brunswick Fur club and others who hunt foxes with dogs say that the welfare of all the apple orchards in Maine depends upon the result of this contest. They say that by using a new bait, which has a peculiar fascinating smell for foxes, the trappers are killing off all the foxes in Maine, and taking them at a time when the fox is practically worthless. One trapper who passed two weeks in the Aroostook county last February came home with more than 300 pelts. In Kennebec county the new scent has been used with such effect that a man may travel all day in newly fallen snow and not see a fox track. It is further asserted that no sooner did the foxes disappear from their haunts than the mice began to girdle the apple trees, killing whole orchards in a single winter. For these reasons the men who hunt foxes with dogs asked the state to put a stop to trapping, and came before the legislature with the names of more than 5,000 orchardists attached to their petitions. In the debate which followed Secretary McKenney, of the board of agriculture, said that skunks killed more mice than foxes, and as foxes killed more mice than foxes, the hunters were trying to preserve the wrong animal. This assertion was disputed by a good number of the farmers present. Then a member of the Fur club offered to bet \$100 that a skunk couldn't catch a mouse in an open field. This was grabbed up by a farmer, and before the committee adjourned more than \$1,000 had been wagered on the result.

No law was passed last winter, the legislature thinking it best to wait and learn the result of the field trial. Meantime both factions have been busy in soliciting support. The fox hunters declare that unless the trapping by scented meat is stopped all the orchards in Maine will be ruined and nobody can raise any hard cider. The farmers, who are equally confident that the foxes are ruining the poultry business of the state and killing off all the skunks, which keep the mice in check. Though the legislature does not meet again in regular session until January, 1899, the fox hunters have obtained nearly 10,000 signatures to their petitions, and have garnered \$5,000 that a skunk cannot catch a mouse, and offered a reward of \$500 to any man who ever saw a fox kill a skunk. From the present indications the controversy promises to become one of the issues in the political campaign of 1898.—N. Y. Sun.

**Fixing Him Out.**  
Hunston—I'd like to go shooting to-morrow. If I could only get a dog that was well-trained.  
Ethel—Oh! I'll let you take Dottie, she! She can stand on her head, and shake hands, and play dead, and say her prayers, and do lots of things!—Puck.

**Ballast as a Distributing Agency.**  
Ballast is the first of the distribution methods which may be combined under the head of "agency of man." The discharge of earth ballast by vessels coming from abroad has been a notable means of distribution of plants by seed. We have just seen how many seeds may germinate from a very small lump of earth, and the possibilities in this direction of the many thousands of pounds of discharged ballast are very great. In fact, the ballast grounds in the neighborhood of great cities are invariably favored botanical collecting spots; they have usually a distinctive flora of their own, and from these centers many introduced plants spread into the surrounding country.—Nature.



## A Desperate Woman.

Experts in insanity tell us that anyone goes insane, frequently their whole nature is reversed. They do and say exactly the opposite things to what they would do in their sane minds. A mother whose mind breaks down under extreme nervous tension may turn upon the one object in all the world most precious to her—her baby. The terrible nervous tension under which many women live and suffer because of some weakness or disease of their sex, keeps them on the very verge of insanity. The constant drag and strain upon the complicated and delicate organism affects the whole nervous system and works upon the brain with an almost irresistible madness. The timely influence of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. It is the one perfect and positive specific for every derangement of woman's special organism. It is a scientific and permanent cure for those severe, chronic, complicated cases which doctors usually consider hopeless. It is the only medicine of its kind devised by an educated and skilled physician.

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## THE SWORD OF SALADIN.

A Blacksmith Says He Knows the Secret of Damascus Steel.

The Damascus blade of Saladin may yet be duplicated. It will be if the claims of James H. Duffy, a Machiasport (Me.) blacksmith, are justified by the practical results which he promises. Mr. Duffy asserts that he discovered the long lost art of producing Damascus steel, and also the ancient method of hardening copper and brass.

Ten years has the "Machiasport Wizard," as his neighbors call him, spent patiently experimenting with the metals, during which time he has often severely taxed his financial resources. He declares, however, that for his sacrifices he has been more than repaid by his success.

Mr. Duffy was first led into making experiments when he opened his smith shop in Machiasport. He was born in Bangor 34 years ago, and after a few years' schooling learned the trade of horseshoeing and blacksmithing. When he moved to Machiasport the canning industry had begun to grow, and the rolling mills were used in the factories were sent to him for repairs. He noticed that the coppers wore away rapidly, and that when two-thirds of the business end of one was worn away it had to be cast aside.

Mr. Duffy thought that if copper could be welded two old soldering tools that were worthless might be welded into one that would be worth something. The difficulty was to find the way to weld them. It couldn't be done by the ordinary way of heating, because copper became soft when heated, and therefore as soldering tools they would be no good after having been welded.

A few years ago he astonished the factory men by taking a lot of cast off soldering coppers and bringing them back nicely welded and as perfect as new ones. In fact, they were more perfect than new ones, for not only did they hold the heat as well as the new tools, but they did not wear away so quickly, and for this reason alone they were more valuable.

Then the wizard surprised his intimate acquaintances by producing from his laboratory a copper sword, which he proceeded to bend into a circle and let it spring back into shape again, which, says the Boston Globe, it did as the most perfect Damascus steel would. Next he astonished them by producing a copper razor, with which he gave himself a perfect shave and the razor still retained its keen edge.

The wizard will talk about the quality of the metal he produces, but is reticent in regard to the process through which he puts it. He will only say that in his experiments in attempting to weld copper without rendering it permanently soft he struck upon the secret of the ancients' method of making Damascus steel.

He positive that he has it. He says that, although he has made some wonderful discoveries, he has learned that these are but the beginning of a great series of discoveries that must follow as part of these. The transmutation of metals, he thinks, is one of these that will follow upon his discoveries.—N. Y. Herald.

**Shipping Snapping Turtles.**  
Huge, live snapping turtles are coming to the New York market from Grand Rapids, Mich. This is a new industry started in a modest way, but which shows great possibilities. It has been conducted by one man, who since July 7 has expressed 3,500 pounds of snapping turtles to New York, Philadelphia and Cincinnati. The turtles were all caught in Muskegon river, near the head of the lake. The river for miles up is infested with turtles in such numbers that the supply may almost be said to be unlimited. They grow and thrive in the most flourishing manner. In warm weather they are active and can readily be caught by those who know how to do it. Turtles are in good demand in the large cities by restaurants and hotels, which use them for making terrapin. They are handled and shipped in strong tanks, and those forty have been weighed from four to twenty pounds each, the average being from 15 to 20 pounds.—N. Y. Times.

**CASTORIA.**  
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## WILL GROW KAFFIR CORN

A New Plan to Fertilize the Arid Regions of the West.

New Mills Will Have to Be Put Up to Grind the Corn—It Makes a Flour Finer Than That of Wheat.

A new industry, which is expected to have a great development during 1898, and which will add largely to the agricultural resources of the arid region of western Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma, once reckoned almost a part of the great American desert, is the raising of kaffir corn. Kaffir, as its name suggests, is of Africa origin, and is a substitute for both corn and wheat. For two or three years past the department of agriculture has been experimenting with it, and it has been found particularly adapted to the drought-stricken region of the west, where a crop of Indian corn cannot be realized oftener than once in three years on the average. Kaffir, it is claimed, flourishes best where there is least rainfall, and the seven plagues of Kansas—drought, sand, alkali, hot winds, grasshoppers, chinch bugs and fake rainmakers—will be alike powerless to affect it. If all that the advocates of the new cereal claim for it proves true, it will prove a boon, indeed, to the dry district, and may even drive out its eighth and greatest plague—the mortgage holders.

In appearance, kaffir seems to be a cross between corn and sorghum. Its season for growth is about the same as that of native corn, and it is cultivated in much the same manner. The stalks grow to a height of from four to six feet and are about the size and thickness of ordinary corn stalks. The stalks bear more leaves than those of Indian corn, however, and these leaves are broader, longer and of a deeper color. The grain grows at the top of the stalk and the kernels, which are unprotected by husks, are considerably smaller than those of the native product and of a dark purplish blue. These seeds, or kernels, are very hard and firm, and in grinding them there is little waste, on account of the thinness of the hull. A bushel of the grain weighs 60 pounds, the same as wheat, but when ground it requires six or seven pounds more of wheat to make an equal amount of flour. Though the new grain is not well enough established to determine its average yield per acre, it is believed that in this respect also it will have a considerable advantage over wheat.

The one objection which was thus far prevented the cultivation of kaffir from reaching any considerable proportions has been the inability of existing mills to grind it into flour suitable for making bread. Many Kansas farmers and a few in Oklahoma raised a little of the new grain as an experiment during the past season. But when they took it to the local mills, most of which are equipped for the old burr process of grinding, the result was found unsatisfactory, as the flour, though excellent for cattle, was not ground fine enough for house use. To overcome this difficulty two or three of the men, who are interested in establishing kaffir as a staple cereal, went to Chicago, where a series of experiments with different kinds of machinery was carried on.

As a result, it was found that the finest of roller machinery worked satisfactorily in reducing the new grain and turned it into flour whiter and of finer quality than that obtained from wheat. A mill at Marquette, Kan., has already been equipped with the new machinery, and is doing a lively business in grinding kaffir flour. It is announced that a big mill, specially equipped for this work, will be erected in Chicago, and will soon be ready for operation.

The flour made from kaffir has been examined and pronounced as nutritious as wheat or corn. The bread made from it is as light and as agreeable to the taste as the best wheat bread. It is claimed that the new kaffir or flour will answer every purpose to fulfill which Indian corn and wheat are now relied on. The prospects of the new grain seem every bright, and if it endures the test of a year or two of trial we may expect to see its cultivation extensively adopted, at least in the region where rain is an infrequent and uncertain luxury and disappointment is often the lot of the farmer who relies upon the two great American staples.—Washington Star.

**Another Solomon.**  
A horse dealer in a Scotch town having hired a horse to an attorney, the latter, either through bad usage or some other cause, killed the horse, when the dealer insisted upon payment by bill if it was not convenient to pay cash. The attorney had no objection to grant a bill, but said it must be at a long date. The dealer told him to fix his own time, when the attorney drew a promissory note, making it payable on the day of judgment. An action was raised, when the attorney asked the presiding judge to look at the bill. Having done so, the judge replied: "The bill is perfectly good, and as this is the day of judgment I decree that you pay to-morrow."—Spare Moments.

**Rival Claims in Africa.**  
There are four different grounds on which European nations base their claims to territory in Africa. One is actual occupation; another is a treaty with a native chief, conceding territory; a third is the claim that the occupation of the mouth of a river gives a right to the country which it waters; a fourth is the "hinterland" theory, by which is meant that a nation which occupies a strip of territory on the coast has a right to the country lying behind it. Of these grounds of claim, the first is least likely to be contested; but as to the others, the same chief may give concessions to two or three rival nations; or the territory which is claimed by one because it is watered by a river the mouth of which it controls may be claimed by another because it is in the "hinterland" of territory which it possesses on the coast.—Youth's Companion.

**A Poor Dancer.**  
He (after a wait)—Do you know, I could die waiting.  
She (out of breath)—Perhaps you could, Mr. Hopnot; but that is no reason why you should expect others to die with you.—Roxbury Gazette.

**About the Elephant.**  
"Arrah, thin, Moriarity! an' phwat is thin bits av bone a-shickin' av' at his mout, O dunno?"  
"Shure, an' 'thin's fer 't pick his teeth wid whin he's got 'tough stin' his hay."—Judge.

## THE WOMACK-STUBBS CHECKS.

The mystery of the two Womack checks, which played such a conspicuous part in the Stubbs investigation, has been solved. The grand jury of the Hastings Court of Richmond had before them Mr. Greer Baughmann, who turned over the two checks given Grand Commander Stubbs by Mr. J. W. Womack, of the American Book Company, to a well-known ex-Confederate leader, who in turn placed them before the investigating committee. Mr. Baughmann explained to the grand jury that he obtained the checks from Mr. Montgomery West, who found them among some trash at the store of West & Johnson, a well known book and stationery firm there. Mr. Womack at one time had a desk in the store of this firm and it is supposed he left the checks with other papers which were found in a pile of rubbish. The grand jury adjourned until January 6, when it will hear Mr. West and other witnesses.

## TO DYE CARPET RAGS.

A Simple and Easy Way to Color Carpet Rags, so They Will Not Fade.

To color carpet rags so they will not fade one should be sure to get the Fast Diamond Dyes for cotton. There are some twelve fast and special colors, while for wool there are about thirty. All of the Diamond Dyes that are marked fast will make colors that do not fade or crock.

It is impossible to get satisfactory colors on both wool and cotton with the same dye, although some cheap dyes that are able to make only a few colors, claim that their dyes will color both cotton and wool. A trial soon shows by ruined goods the falsity of these claims. Take nothing but the original and reliable Diamond Dyes that have been used in thousands of homes for the last twenty years.

## A LOG EXPLOSION.

While the family of Edward Roseborough were seated around the fireplace in their home in C. A. lotte, N. C., a stick of wood was thrown on to replenish the fire. Almost instantly there was a terrific explosion and a broadside of splinters rained from the fireplace. When the smoke cleared away, and the extent of the damage came to be counted up it was found that every one of the family had been seriously wounded.

## HUMAN VOICE HEARD FIFTEEN HUNDRED MILES.

Nashville, Tenn., Jan. 5.—It is believed the long distance telephone record was broken to-day at Gallatin, Tenn., when John H. Conner, representative of the Bell Company, talked with the operator in Norfolk, Va. The circuit used passed through Nashville, Evansville, Terre Haute, Indianapolis, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, Washington and Richmond to Norfolk, making fully fifteen hundred miles.

## PICTURES BY TELEGRAPH.

The New York Herald recently presented the first practical test for newspaper purposes of the transmission of pictures by electricity. The picture "wired" was that of Nelson Cox, the disqualified juror in the Eli Shaw trial at Camden, N. J., and a comparison shows that the likeness was not lost in the transmission.

## THE GROWTH OF TEXAS.

The State of Texas made great progress during the year just ended. It is estimated the State gains 150,000 in population. The State is now well covered with farms and ranches, there being little good land left not under fence. The products of field, ranches, factories and mines during 1897 easily footed up \$300,000,000. The great advantage has been in agriculture and cattle. Railroad and factory building has been slow—less, if anything, than usual. The oil product on an and C. rismans proves that the State will soon be reckoned as equalling some of the Middle States.

Though the Republican and bolters newspapers of New York would have the public believe that every thing is prosperous there, the State's income is so reduced that it is proposed even to tax the deposits in the savings banks of the State. When taxes must be increased, the poor are always the sufferers. It is constitutional to tax their rainy day's fund, saved from their wages, but it is unconstitutional to tax the surplus incomes of the plutocrats who have acquired their riches by means of special legislation in their interest.—Alexandria Gazette.

## A GREAT SANITARIUM.

Negotiations are in progress for the purchase of a large tract of land near Hampton up-n which to erect one of the largest sanitariums in the United States. A New York syndicate, with a capital of \$2,000,000, has made an offer for a desirable site. The institution is to be one of the most complete of its kind in this country. The building will include in its interior arrangements every modern scientific device known to the medical fraternity, while from an architectural point of view it will present an imposing appearance. A corps of experienced physicians will be in constant attendance. The grounds surrounding the main building will be laid off in the most attractive style of the landscape gardener's art, and for the convenience of those who prefer the privacy of home to hotel life while under the care of the institution, a number of handsome and comfortably furnished cottages will be provided.

## A MIGHTY MEAN MAN.

Wes Hall is the name of a Smith county (Kan.) farmer, whose 17-year-old daughter died last Tuesday, says the Kansas City Journal. He came to town at a red coffin, found one it is said that had been badly damaged in a fire that he could buy for \$3. Loading the coffin into his wagon, so the story goes, he drove around to the different carpenters of the town search of one who would repair it. Knowing that Hall was well off, the carpenters indignantly refused to do the work, and he was compelled to take the casket home and repair it in the kitchen of the house where his dead daughter lay. The local papers took up the affair, and it is believed that the country will be made to warm for Hall by his scandalous neighbors.

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## N. Y. W. Norfolk & Western

Schedule in Effect

December 5th, 1897

LEAVE BUENA VISTA, VA., DAILY

SOUTHWEST	
Lv New York	3:30 p.m.
Philadelphia	5:58 p.m.
Baltimore	7:53 p.m.
Washington	9:00 p.m.
Shenandoah Junction	8:35 a.m.
Charlottesville	10:00 a.m.
Boston	12:35 p.m.
Buenos Aires	2:13 p.m.
Natural Bridge	3:41 p.m.
Romano	4:10 p.m.
Pulaski	6:30 p.m.
Bristol	6:50 p.m.
Knoxville	8:00 p.m.
Chattanooga	8:40 p.m.
Memphis	7:10 p.m.
Ar New Orleans	6:10 a.m.

NORTHWEST	
Lv New Orleans	7:10 p.m.
Memphis	8:20 p.m.
Chattanooga	1:20 p.m.
Knoxville	1:40 p.m.
Bristol	6:20 p.m.
Pulaski	9:18 p.m.
Romano	11:35 p.m.
Natural Bridge	12:38 a.m.
Buenos Aires	1:00 a.m.
Charlottesville	3:40 a.m.
Shenandoah Junction	3:40 a.m.
Washington	5:40 a.m.
Baltimore	7:45 a.m.
Philadelphia	8:50 a.m.
Ar New York	1:20 p.m.

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